

The Milk of Sorrow¹

A Theory on the Violence of Memory

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L'auteure élabore une théorie de la mémoire de la violence et sa réalité phénoménologique, la "teta asustada" ou le "sein terrorisé." Cet article décrit la violence sexuelle qui caractérise les conflits armés à l'intérieur du Pérou. L'auteure avance que même s'il y a des silences qui devraient être respectés, d'autres doivent être divulgués, comme le silence des milliers d'hommes qui ont encouragé, observé la violence sexuelle, y ont participé et peut-être même qui ont voulu l'empêcher. Elle termine son article avec quelques réflexions sur une aporie: comment réparer l'irréparable?

La autora analiza "La Teta Asustada" como teoría sobre la violencia de la memoria y como realidad fenomenológica. El artículo describe la violencia sexual masiva que caracterizó el conflicto armado interno del Perú. La autora propone que mientras hay silencios que deben ser respetados, hay otros que deben ser sacudidos, tal como el silencio mantenido por los miles de hombres que participaron en, fomentaron, observaron—o quizás intentaron parar—la violencia sexual. Concluye con comentarios sobre la aporía: ¿cómo reparar lo irreparable?

In 1995, communities throughout Ayacucho, Peru were in ruins: charred houses, abandoned farmlands, and innumerable mass graves converted the earth itself into yet another actor in this tragedy. The social landscape was equally volatile as *campesinos* struggled to rebuild their communities in the shadow of a recent past marked by lethal, intimate violence. The memories were palpably fresh, painful, omnipresent; they settled in the mountains where so many had died, in the rivers tinged red by blood, and in the ruins that served as silent witnesses to the atrocities. But it was in my conversations with Quechua-speaking women that other "historical sites" emerged: the women's own bodies, which incorporated these lacerating memories.

There are various ways to approach the legacies of armed conflict. The discourse of trauma—and the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—has played a

dominant role within medical and humanitarian approaches to suffering. The diagnosis was first included in the 1980 edition of the *American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostics and Statistics Manual* with specific reference to Vietnam War veterans. Over the past three decades the application of this diagnosis has expanded dramatically, and the concept of traumatic memory has become the primary framework for dealing with the suffering of war. There is an enormous market for trauma, and an industry of trauma experts deployed to post-conflict countries to detect symptoms of PTSD via "culturally sensitive" questionnaires. No doubt it is strategic to frame suffering within a scientific idiom with universal pretensions: indeed, the discourse of trauma serves as a psychological Esperanto, authorizing suffering and allowing both researchers and the broader public to make that suffering "legible" and legitimate for an international audience.

However, in the process of globalizing the discourse of trauma via humanitarian and post-conflict interventions, the concept of trauma has become increasingly normative, making it difficult to think otherwise about violent events and their aftermath. From survivors of the Holocaust to Vietnam War veterans; from female victims of violence in Latin America to child soldiers in the Congo to survivors of sexual violence in the Balkans, dominant theories of trauma dazzle in their alleged capacity to capture vastly divergent experiences fraught with moral and etiological complexity.

Parallel with the growth of the trauma industry, however, has been a vociferous debate regarding PTSD and its underlying assumptions. The literature questioning the utility of PTSD in non-clinical contexts—for example, in post-war contexts—is abundant, and it is not my goal to rehearse a well-worn series of debates. However, there is a gap between academic debates and public policy. What might be considered "passé" within academic circles may still pose a struggle to be waged in terms of funding, service design, and delivery. When I worked with the Truth

and Reconciliation Commission in Ayacucho, it was clear that many NGOs would be competing for a place in line to work on the theme of mental health. A mere three years later, many people I spoke with would accuse those same organizations of “trafficking with the blood and pain of the people” in an effort to secure funding during the “mental health boom.”

At this point a caveat is in order. A conventional anthropological move is to speak “our cultural relativism” to their (read: psychiatry’s) universalism via a litany of examples that may at times resemble a compendium of exotica. That

husband out because if the soldiers showed up, they would have killed him. I gave birth all by myself. During that time—when we were in hiding—I didn’t even have milk for my baby. How could I have milk when there was nothing to eat? One day some other women told me, “if you leave your baby in the mountain, the *apu* (mountain god) would grab her and she would die.” Remembering this, I left her on a mountain so she would die. How was she going to live like this? I had passed on all my suffering through my blood, through my breast. I saw her from a distance, but since

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is not my goal. Rather, I am interested in questioning an enduring juxtaposition: some individuals and groups have “theory,” while others have “beliefs”; some individuals and groups export categories of knowledge, while others are considered “culture bound,” allegedly living under the influence of their timeless “beliefs.”

The words “theory” and “belief” are inscribed within an imbalance of power, and we have seen ample evidence of this in the debates regarding the film *La Teta Asustada*. Many people have referred to an “ancient belief” or “Andean myth” when talking about either the film or the term itself. Categorizing “*la teta asustada*” in these terms reinforces the dichotomy between producers and consumers of knowledge—a dichotomy that leaves little room to appreciate the sophisticated theories Quechua-speakers have elaborated about violence and its effects, about social life and their struggles to rebuild it.

In this text, I analyze “*la teta asustada*” as a theory about the violence of memory and as a phenomenological reality. In considering the causes of “*la teta asustada*,” I turn to the massive sexual violence that characterized the internal armed conflict in Peru. I am compelled by the profound injustice of both rape and its narrative burden; it is, of course, women who are incited to speak about sexual violence. There are silences that should be respected. However, there are others that should be disturbed—such as the silence maintained by the thousands of men who participated in, encouraged, observed—and perhaps attempted to stop—sexual violence. I conclude with a few reflections on an *aporia*: how to repair the irreparable?

Local Biologies

My daughter was born the day after the massacre at Lloqlllepampa. I was hiding in a hut. I had to throw my

she was crying I had to go back and get her because if the soldiers heard her, they would have killed me. That’s why I say that my daughter is still traumatized about everything that happened—everything passed through my milk, my blood, my worries. Today, she can’t study. She’s 17 years old and is in fifth grade. She can’t progress—every year she fails. She says she has a headache, that her head burns. What is it—fear? She’s always been like this. I sent her to a *curandero*, and he changed her luck. For a while she was well, but after she was just the same. I have taken her to the health clinic and they gave me a pill [Dicloxacillin] for her to take everyday. What can it be? She doesn’t want to take the pill anymore.

— Salomé Baldeón, Accomarca

During my research in Ayacucho, many women asked me: “Why should we remember everything that happened? To martyr our bodies—nothing more?” The corporeal idiom that women use reflects a gendered division of emotional labor. There is a memory specialization within these communities, and it is women who carry—who incorporate—the pain and mourning of their communities. In this division of emotional labor, it is women who specialize in the daily suffering of the “difficult years.” Consequently, it is *phenomenological* that they express this history via an elaborate corporeal idiom. Their historicity is embodied.

In Quechua “*ñuñu*” means both breast and milk depending on the context and the suffix. With the term “*la teta asustada*”—literally, the frightened breast—I sought to capture this double meaning; to convey how strong negative emotions can alter the body and how a mother could, via blood in utero or via breast milk, transmit this dis-ease to her baby. If we turn to medical anthropol-

ogy, we can locate the theory Quechua-speakers have developed within the concept of “local biologies.” The literature reveals the vast variety of responses to traumatic experiences and stressful events. This variety allows me to insist that one cannot assume a dialectic between an infinity of cultures and a universal biology, but rather between multiple cultures and biologies, both subject to evolutionary, historical, spatial and life cycle transformations, among others.

When I reflect upon the women and their desire not to remember and thus “martyr their bodies”—when I remember the many women who feared breast-feeding their babies and transmitting their “milk of sorrow and worry”—it seems to me they offer an eloquent example of how painful memories accumulate in the body and how one can literally suffer from the symptoms of history. I reiterate that memories not only sediment in buildings, in landscapes, or in other symbols designed for commemoration. Memories also sediment in our bodies, converting them into historical processes and sites.

In one study conducted in Chile, a team of researchers from the University of California at Berkeley and Chapel Hill studied the impact of political violence on pregnant women. For the sample, the researchers determined which barrios of Santiago had suffered more political violence, disappearances—in short, which barrios had been converted into war zones during the military dictatorship. They selected a sample of barrios, ranging from low to high levels of political violence. They followed the pregnancies and deliveries of a sample of women from each barrio and, when they controlled for confounding variables, the researchers determined that the women who had lived in the most violent barrios suffered a fivefold increase in pregnancy and delivery complications (see Zapata, Rebolledo, Atalah, Newman and King).

I am struck both by the study conducted by “experts” as well as by the theory elaborated in these campesino communities regarding the harmful influence of violence, terror and toxic memories on mothers and their babies. One source of these memories was sexual violence.

Sexual Violence

Even though the statistics do not show the magnitude of the problem, the testimonies allow us to infer that rape was a common practice during the conflict. In innumerable accounts, after narrating the horrors of the assassinations, extra-judicial executions and torture, only then in passing do people refer to rape. In light of the fact that most people who gave testimonies cannot name the women involved, these women are not accounted for even though there is knowledge of such acts. For this reason, the TRC has emphasized that in the case of sexual violence, if indeed it is impossible to demonstrate the magnitude of these acts, the qualitative and tangential information

collected affirms that sexual violence against women was a generalized practice during the internal armed conflict. (TRC, Vol. 8: 89-90)

In various texts I have analyzed the conversations my research team and I had with women about the internal armed conflict, illustrating how women narrated much more than their victimization (see Theidon 2004; “Género en Transición”). As I was told in every *pueblo* with which I have worked, women participated in the defense of their communities, their families, and themselves. Striking to me was the insistence on context: when women spoke with us about rape, they situated that violation within broader social dynamics. They detailed the preconditions that structured vulnerability, and emphasized their efforts to minimize harm to themselves and to the people they cared for. With their insistence on context, women situated their experience of sexual violence—those episodes of brutal victimization—within womanly narratives of heroism. When I recall those conversations, I find myself once again seated across from Sra. Edilberta Chocña Sánchez in Hualla. We spent the afternoon talking—she had remained in her community during the war years. Hualla had been considered a militant Shining Path support base; thus when the soldiers arrived in Hualla, they came to “*castigar el pueblo*”—to punish the town. After recounting in detail the massive sexual violence that occurred in the military base, Edilberta took a deep breath, shook her head, and added in a voice resonant with admiration: “So much courage! Those women defended themselves with so much courage.” No doubt.

But I wish now to focus on the men, convinced that if we want to study the gendered dimensions of war we must include an analysis of men and masculinities: far too often, “gender” is reduced to a synonym for “women,” leaving men as the unmarked, unquestioned category. I want to discuss the rapists, insisting that gender sensitive research should include the forms of masculinity forged during an armed conflict as one component in the reconstruction of individual lives and collective existence in the aftermath of war. In its investigation of sexual violence during the internal armed conflict, the PTRC determined that,

With relation to the perpetrators, [sexual violence] involved agents of the state as well as members of Shining Path and the MRTA, although in different degrees of magnitude. In this sense, approximately 83 percent of the reported acts of sexual violence are attributable to the state, and approximately 11 percent correspond to subversive groups (SL and MRTA). If indeed these statistics note an important tendency toward greater responsibility by agents of the state in acts of sexual violence, it is important to bear in mind that subversive groups were responsible for actions such as forced abortion, forced unions, and sexual servitude. (374)

Similarly, from my research it is clear that all armed groups used forms of sexual violence, and that the patterns varied according to group and over time. However, another point is equally clear: the systematic use of sexual violence was a practice deployed by the “forces of order.” There is an irony here: under the threat of Shining Path attacks, authorities in many communities petitioned for the installation of military bases for “security.” As I have learned over the years, those communities suffered a stunning level of sexual violence. The men in these communities constructed the military bases that multiplied throughout

people—capable of tremendous brutality. To lose the sense of shame—a “regulatory emotion” because shame implies an Other in front of whom one feels ashamed—creates men with a recalibrated capacity for atrocity.

Additionally, women emphasize what the soldiers said while raping them: “*Terruca de mierda*” (terrorist of shit), “*ahora aguanta India*” (now take it, Indian), “*carajo, terruca de mierda*” (damn it, terrorist of shit), and “*India de mierda*” (Indian of shit). The soldiers were marking the women with physical and verbal assaults. For example, the soldiers brought women from neighboring communities to

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rural Peru during the internal armed conflict: girls and women “serviced” the troops. In some communities with which I have worked, women began charging for sex; much more common, however, was rape. “Communal security” worked in contradictory ways: where there were soldiers there were rapes and a constant level of sexual violence.

Also generalizable was gang rape. When women described their experiences of rape, it was never one soldier but several. “They raped the women until they could not stand up.” The soldiers were mutilating women with their penises, and the women were bloodied. I want to think a bit more about these blood rituals. When talking about gang rape, we should think about why the soldiers raped this way. An instrumentalist explanation would indicate the soldiers raped in groups in order to overpower a woman, or so that one soldier could serve watch while the others raped. However, it would be a limited reading that attributes this practice to the necessity for pure force or standing watch. When a soldier pressed his machine gun into a woman’s chest, he did not need more force. When the soldiers came down from the bases at night to rape, “privacy” was not their primary concern. They operated with impunity.

Clearly there is a ritualistic aspect to gang rape.² Many people told me that after killing someone, the soldiers drank the blood of their victims, or bathed their faces and chests with the blood. I want to think about the blood ties established between soldiers, and the bloodied wombs that birthed a lethal fraternity. These blood ties united the soldiers, and the bodies of raped women served as the medium for forging those ties. Gang rape not only broke the moral codes that generally govern social life: the practice served as a way to eradicate shame. Committing morally abhorrent acts in front of others not only creates a bond between the perpetrators, but also forges *sinvergüenzas*—shameless

the military base in Hualla to rape them, returning them with their hair cut off as a sign of what had happened. In other conversations in Cayara and Tiquihua, people told us the women returned to their communities “scarred” after having been raped in the bases. The women’s bodies were made to bear witness to the power and barbarism of the “forces of order.” Importantly, in both my conversations as well as the testimonies provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, acts of sexual violence were almost always accompanied by ethnic and racial insults, prompting me to consider the ways in which gender, racial and military hierarchies converged during the internal armed conflict.³

“Racing Rape”

... sexual privilege—and the lack of it—is so deeply inscribed in the history of race in the Andes as to make it impossible to talk about one without thinking about the other. (Weismantel 2001: xxxix)

I begin this section by briefly citing three testimonies that were given to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the first, a former soldier recounted an occasion in which his platoon had detained two women: a female dentist and young girl who was selling fruit juice in the street. The girl—a *chola*—was given to the troops for a *pichanga* (“broom” in Quechua, referring here to gang rape in which all the soldiers participate in turn). There were forty soldiers. The dentist—a *mestiza*—was reserved for the captain (Henriquez 69).⁴

In the second, a former army lieutenant recalled his time stationed at a military checkpoint, charged with examining the documents of everyone who was traveling along the road. He and his men stopped many young

women from the coast, and the unfortunate ones who had no papers knew immediately what they must do: “We want to meet the captain. We don’t want to be with the troops.” As the former lieutenant explained, “Sometimes there were four or five of them. They were with us (the officials) on the condition we didn’t turn them over to the troops. We kept them for ourselves, and let them go the next day. But sometimes there were *cholitas*—we had to give them to the troops. They had to pass through all the soldiers because the troops demanded it” (Henriquez 71).⁵

In thinking about the pervasive use of ethnic and racial insults during acts of gang rape, I found Mary Weismantel’s book, *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes*, extremely helpful. In her detailed analysis of the ways in which acts of sexualized violence confer racial identity, she provides us with insight into the ways in which racial and sexual identities are inscribed on bodies through rituals of domination and submission.

In part her analysis focuses on the *pishtaco*. This figure spans time and space, proving to be a remarkably resilient dramatis personae in Andean tales of racialized and gen-

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The third and final example: A rural Quechua speaking woman spoke about her experience of gang rape: the forced nudity, the number of soldiers, the excruciating pain, and her fear. She provided details, but refused to repeat the words the soldiers had used to insult her. “*Palabras soeces*”—“filthy words”—was all she was willing to say. She could tolerate recounting the sexual violence, but she was not about to repeat the barrage of racial insults she had endured.

Officials and soldiers, *mestizas* and *cholas*, coastal women and rural “Indians,” men and women. There are numerous identities at work in these testimonies, and each of them is located within a hierarchy of power and privilege. I have argued elsewhere that there is no way to discuss the internal armed conflict in Peru without addressing the issues of ethnic discrimination and racism (Theidon 2004: 53). This is poignantly true when we attempt to understand the uses and logics of rape. In the section of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Final Report* that addresses women and sexual violence, the Commissioners state, “Many times, ethnic and racial differences—converted into criteria for naturalizing social inequalities—were invoked by the perpetrators to justify actions committed against those who were their victims” (Vol. 8: 123).⁶ The examples above clearly demonstrate this point. Lighter-skinned women were reserved for the officials; the “*cholas*” and “Indians” were turned over to the troops. In those cases in which both officials and foot soldiers were raping the same women, then it was rank that determined a man’s place in line—and that rank would in turn reflect ethnic and racial stratification.⁷ Who was entitled to inflict pain on another reflected gender and racial hierarchies; however, I am intrigued by the inverse, *by the ways in which the raping was used to produce those hierarchies*. Thus I consider “racing rape.”

dered violence. The *pishtaco*—an aggressive male figure who sucks the body fat out of his Indian victims, slashing their throats and raping the women with his insatiable phallus—is always white. He has been, at different historical moments, a Spanish priest, a *hacendado*, a gringo anthropologist, a Peruvian engineer from a NGO, or a member of the community whose sudden wealth gives rise to rumors that he has somehow exploited his neighbors: the constant is the fusion of aggression, sexuality and whiteness. As Weismantel persuasively argues, “In linking a man’s propensity to sexual abuse to his race, *pishtaco* stories interrogate the long and often forgotten history of race and rape. ‘Rape,’ like ‘woman,’ or ‘whiteness,’ does not have a single transhistorical definition, but rather is produced through and defined within specific historical contexts” (169). Within these specific historical contexts, the *pishtaco* “is whitened by his sexual aggressivity, and masculinized by virtue of his whiteness” (xl). Thus ethnic or racial identity is to some extent achieved, a structural position that one body can assume relative to another.

This is what I am trying to capture with the idea of “racing rape.” Given the ethnically- or racially-based distribution of women for the purpose of raping, the troops—drawn from darker skinned social strata because class has colour in Peru—were raping women not unlike themselves. *La pichanga* consisted of *cholos* raping *cholas*—and of *cholos* bombarding their victims with the same ethnic insults they had endured many times in their own lives. Raping, combined with the ethnic insults, was a means by which these young men “whitened” themselves and transferred ethnic humiliation to their victims. As Judith Butler has argued with regards to gender, identity is performative. Rather than being “already there” waiting for its expression in language, identity may be the product of the “signifying acts of linguistic life” (144). To borrow the title of an

influential article, “The Women are More Indian”—and raping them certainly made them so.⁸

However, even in the midst of so much sexual violence, one can imagine there were some men who did not want to participate in the raping. In my conversations with ex-soldiers and ex-sailors, they insisted that participation in the rapes was obligatory. It is certainly possible that this fiction is a balm for their conscience; some men, however, provided details about what happened to those soldiers and sailors who did not want to join in. A single example from a conversation I had with someone who served in La Marina in Ayacucho during the early 1980s is telling.

With the recruits, some of them were really young. They were just adolescents. They didn't want to participate [in the rapes]. If someone refused, the rest of the men would take him aside and rape him. All of them would rape him, with the poor guy screaming. They said they were “changing his voice”—with so much screaming, his voice would lower and he wouldn't be a woman anymore.

Again we see that raping was a means of establishing hierarchies of power, between armed groups and the population, but also within the armed forces themselves (see, for example, Diken and Lausten). It was common to force men in a community to watch as the soldiers raped their wives, daughters, and sisters. And it is striking that the soldiers raped according to rank, beginning with the officers and finishing up with the recruits. There were multiple audiences for this violent sexuality, and the performance was intended at least in part to impress other men with whom one jockeyed for status within the battalion. The erections achieved and placed to brutal purposes in the context of gang rape lead me to insist the men perform for one another.⁹

When we speak of militarization, we need to think beyond the stationing of soldiers in the bases. Militarization also implies changes in what it means to be a man or a woman: the hypermasculinity of the warrior is based upon erasing those characteristics considered “feminine” (Theidon 2003). This hypermasculinity is constructed by scorning the feminine, and one aspect of that scorn is feminizing other men by inflicting physical and symbolic violence.¹⁰

Narrating Heroism

Marcos caught my attention the first time I saw him in a communal assembly. He was a striking figure in khaki and black, his posture exaggeratedly erect. His black hair was cut short, and his black sweater alternated with his camouflage pants, finally ceding to his black leather boots. In the room he shared with his young wife, various pictures of Marcos with his machine gun and belts of ammunition

were hanging by nails from the wall. He told me about those pictures one evening.

I was in the army when when las papas quemaban [the potatoes were burning, referring to the heat of battle], in '95 or '96. One time we were out on patrol near Pucayacu where we had a confrontation with the terrucos and killed six of them. We captured una china [a young girl]. We were a total of 28 soldiers, and everyone raped that poor china. I didn't because she was 15 and I was only 17—I felt like she was my sister. Afterwards we let her go because she begged us—she said she'd been forced into Sendero in the jungle. I wonder where that poor girl went? The officers in the army allowed all of that. They even told us “Those fucking terrucos rape your women. Is that all right? That's why they told us, “I authorize you [to rape].” They also made us eat gunpowder for breakfast. We weren't afraid of anything. (Huaychao, February 2003)

Not one man with whom I have spoken admitted to having participated in rape. I have had men tell me about having killed, but in no conversation has a man ever talked about participating in rape.¹¹ The same men who have described in detail the last minutes and expressions of a dying victim—the struggle that gives way to resigned limbs, to silence, to unblinking, glassy eyes—have always insisted it was other men who were raping. It is difficult to narrate one's heroism when a man was one of 28 soldiers standing in line to rape a young girl. I am not accusing Marcos, but rather noting that each narrator screens the facts he presents to his interlocutor, and the representation of self is a continuous negotiation between what to hide and what to reveal. But listening to Marcos, I heard the echoes of those hoarse recruits.

I have wondered many times where these former soldiers and sailors are now. Although the current government celebrates them as heroes of *La Patria*—and many, without a doubt, behaved heroically—there are other versions of history. How are these men after what they have done? I must assume they also carry the traces of the armed conflict and their participation in atrocities. When they caress their wives, when they look into the faces of their little girls, when they stare into a mirror—what do they see reflected there?¹² I see this as one legacy of the war that has not been studied, and obviously it would be methodologically challenging. However, I am compelled by the deep injustice of both rape and its narrative burden. It is, of course, women who are incited to speak about sexual violence; the silence of the gang rapists is left undisturbed. I have never heard anyone ask a man, “Did you have blood on your penis? Were you first in line, or tenth? Did you penetrate her vagina or her anus? Did you ejaculate? How many times?” I imagine we recoil just reading the questions, and yet women are routinely asked to narrate their experiences in an idiom of sexual

vulnerability and degradation. What does it mean to be asked to narrate your life in an idiom that cannot possibly do you justice?

Conclusions

I conclude with some thoughts regarding post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenges, particularly with regard to sexual violence and reparations. In an effort to respond to the massive damages inflicted by the internal armed conflict, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission designed the Program of Integral Reparations (PIR) as a means of reaffirming the dignity of victims and to promote national reconciliation and sustainable peace. The PIR is one of the most comprehensive reparations program that any truth commission has elaborated, and it includes various forms of reparation: symbolic, health and educational services, restitution of citizenship rights, individual economic reparations and collective communal reparations, among others.

As one step in the reparation process, the Council on Reparations is compiling the National Victims Registry. To date, the Council has received only 2,021 applications for victim status as a result of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Simply speaking, in spite of many efforts implemented to assure that “women speak,” Quechua-speaking women have overwhelmingly chosen silence—even a smoldering silence—over speaking about abhorrent experiences. It is important to remember that in some cases rapes was used as a means of making women talk.

What might be done to ensure that the right to reparations does not impose an obligation to speak? Given that women overwhelmingly refuse to talk about rape in the first person, what might constitute reparations or redress? How does one attempt to “repair” the unspoken? I do not pose these questions rhetorically: designing reparations programs that address the question of sexual violence against women is a challenge confronting many post-conflict countries. I do not have the answer, but am quite certain how *not* to go about it.

In his work on a consultancy with Sierra Leonean refugee women in northern Liberia, Mats Utas was surprised that every single woman they interviewed readily declared she had been raped during the Sierra Leonean Civil War. As he soon realized, presenting themselves as victims was a means by which women effectively established themselves as ‘legitimate recipients’ of humanitarian aid” (408). Testimony about rape was a ticket to aid.

What about the ethics of this trade? What about the coercive elements of “tell me your story of sexual victimization and you’ll receive a blanket and cans of food?” Or, in the context of a post-war reparations program, “provide graphic testimony about your rape and perhaps receive a stipend?” I cannot divorce methods from ethics: in this case, both are repugnant. There are questions that we do not have a right to ask, and silences that must be respected.

As I think back on the conversations we had, women consistently expressed a desire for redistributive justice: scholarships for their children, decent housing, potable water, food in the house, and crops and livestock in their fields. This is what women demanded over and over again—both the women who spoke with us about rape, and the hundreds more that did not. We should work with this vision of redistributive justice and expand it to include shame. One thing that could be redistributed is the shame that has been unjustly apportioned to women; this shame should belong to the rapists, who have to date enjoyed total impunity.

I conclude by returning to the theory of “*la teta asustada*,” and the short-sighted efforts of President Alan García to block the construction of a Memory Museum in Peru. His commemorative short-sightedness is combined with his blind insistence that the armed forces committed only a few “excesses and errors” during the internal armed conflict. Can García and his advisors really believe that by refusing to house the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s photo exhibit Yuyanapaq that they can dislodge—can *disembody*—the memories and counter-memories of the internal armed conflict? In nerves that burn, in martyred bodies, in mother’s milk that transmitted so much pain and sorrow—in these historical sites, there is theory about the tenacity of memory. There is also a demand for justice.

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¹“*La teta asustada*” is literally “the frightened breast,” and draws upon the author’s book *Entre Prójimos: el conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú* (Theidon 2004). We have translated the term as “the milk of sorrow,” following the translation used by Claudia Llosa for her award-winning film inspired by *Entre Prójimos*.

²See Cynthia Enloe for her discussion of war rape and male bonding.

³I use the term race intentionally. While it may be more

accurate to think in terms of ethnicity given that race has no biological basis, my research convinces me that it is more appropriate to think of racism when analyzing discrimination in Peru. I met mothers who were eager to marry me off to their sons to “whiten the family” or “improve the race.” There is, I argue, a biological imaginary fueling these comments, and most certainly prompting the sorts of insults that Quechua speaking peasants are routinely subjected to (see Theidon 2004).

⁴Racial categories in Peru can be ambiguous; however, as a general rule the term *chola* (or *cholo*) is a racial category between “Indian” and “white,” and has many demeaning connotations. *Mestiza* also reflects hybridity, but implies a higher status on the hierarchy. “Indian” is considered a very insulting term, as is “*chuto*.” The literature on race and ethnicity in the Andes is vast; however, two very insightful sources are De la Cadena and Weismantel.

⁵As this testimony indicates, there is a racialized geography in Peru, with coastal and urban locations conferring a higher status relative to people from rural areas, particularly the highlands. Thus the young women from the coast were privileged relative to the more rural *cholas*.

⁶Author’s translation. In the original: “*Muchas veces, las diferencias étnicas y raciales—convertidas en criterios de naturalización de las desigualdades sociales—fueron invocadas por los perpetradores contra quienes fueron sus víctimas*” (TRC, Vol. 8: 123).

⁷Drawing upon her research in Guatemala, Diane Nelson has written that “Reports of brutal barracks training suggests that internalized racism is a tool used to break the boys down so they may be remade as soldiers, in part by promising them marks of ladino identity (modern bourgeois practices like wearing shoes and eating meat) and of masculinity. Mayan men are often feminized in relation to traditional practices and in their limited power vis-à-vis the ladino” (91). Military service, for all of its abuses, is thus a way to become “less Indian” in a context in which “The Indian is often coded as female” (Nelson 182). This holds true in Peru as well where young rural men swell the lowest ranks of the army.

⁸In “Las mujeres son más indias [The Women are More Indian],” Marisol De la Cadena analyzes the themes of gender and ethnicity in Cuzco, suggesting that because women speak less Spanish and have less urban experience, they are considered “more Indian.” That is, gender, race, and ethnicity are axes of differentiation which function in a multiplicative manner, prejudicing the women who find themselves at the crossroads of these forms of categorizing people and constructing hierarchies based upon those categories.

⁹There is much more that needs to be understood about the pleasure of the rapists. I found myself returning to Elaine Scarry’s influential book, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. In her sophisticated analysis of torture, missing is the perpetrator’s pleasure. In the case of sexual violence—and I imagine this would

be true of other acts of torture as well—I believe the person or persons inflicting the pain are quite aware of the Other’s suffering. That pain is part of the titillation. As repugnant as the idea is, the torturer’s delight requires further reflection.

¹⁰In her analysis of the gendered dynamics of armed conflict, Cynthia Cockburn argues that, “...male-dominant systems involve a hierarchy among men, producing different and unequal masculinities, always defined in relation not only to one another but to women” (16).

¹¹The fact I am a woman may certainly contribute to men’s silence about rape; however, I have worked with several male research assistants and they did not find men forthcoming on this topic. This may be a more pervasive silence. For instance, in Jean Hatzfeld’s interviews with genocidaires in Rwanda, the men speak in a matter of fact way about killing and their participation in the genocide. However, as I read *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*, I noticed none of the men included themselves when describing the massive raping of Tutsi women and girls. Kelly offers one way of understanding this: “Any ‘peace’ involves a reworking of power relations, not just between nations or parts of nations but between men and women. Attempts are made to conscript women into a ‘rebuilding the nation’ agenda in which their needs are subordinated to those of repairing the damage to men and ‘the society’.” One central, but universally neglected, element of this is that the violations women experienced during the conflict are silenced, since the male combatants need to be constructed as heroes rather than rapists” (62). This comment is suggestive, but it also requires attentiveness to the nature of the armed conflict and the construction of winners and losers, heroes and victims.

¹²The silence of the perpetrators is a theme worthy of further research. I was struck by Antje Krog’s comment that, to her knowledge, no rapist applied for amnesty from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As I completed revisions on this paper, I also came across a fascinating piece by Roland Littlewood. In laying out a research agenda on military rape, he insists on the importance of understanding the motivations and experiences of the men, while acknowledging how difficult it will be to answer these questions given the “...near impossibility of research on humans ... and because of the post-conflict disgust, on the part of the principal and his surviving victim which prevents any sort of detailed contextual study” (13).

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A. KAISER

Every Thursday at 3pm

Women maintain. Daily,
clean the house, dust empty bedrooms, iron
embroidered kerchiefs.

Women bear children, this life.
Carry it with them. Feed it with their breasts.
Change diapers, wipe noses, help with homework,
cushion broken hearts,
maintain presence.

Bring up. Keep up.

Women maintain. Weekly,
behold the disappeared. The birthed and the
stolen
etched into these ironed kerchiefs.

For 10, 20, 30 days, years, more, women
silently circle their stories of elevators invading
still nights.

Of false charges, absent addresses, suspended
hopes.

Women bear children, their presence, their
disappearances.

The daily work of witness women
maintain, bear, behold.

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